

LAS March 2013 Headlines:

Unearthing secrets of the 'Ancient Southwest'

By Quentin Young, Longmont Times-Call

Steve Lekson is out to change your mind about cultures that have lived throughout the Southwest during the course of more than a thousand years. His ambition is captured in the very title of a book he wrote on the subject, "A History of the Ancient Southwest."

Having written about the ancient Southwest, Lekson now is exploring the subject through a gallery exhibition.

He is the curator of "Ancient Southwest: Peoples, Pottery and Place," an exhibition that opened this week at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History.

The show, on display until next February, features more than a hundred ceramic works and is organized in seven sections, each representing one of the main cultural groups that inhabited the Southwest between 500 and 1600 A.D.: the Hohokam, Early Pueblo, Chaco, Mesa Verde, Mimbres, Casas Grandes and Pueblo.



A Red Mesa Black-on-White Bowl, left, from New Mexico's La Plata Valley and a similar piece from Chaco Canyon in New Mexico are part of a new exhibit, "Ancient Southwest: Peoples, Pottery and Place," at the University of Colorado's Museum of Natural History. (Paul Aiken/Daily Camera)

The subject is big, and Lekson's rethinking of it is sweeping. He says many people view the ancient Southwest as a place that was "serene, spiritual, communal," a stereotype sold in tourist destinations and "accompanied by endless, noodling flute music" and which was invented by "Santa Fe civic leaders and culture-brokers around the time of World War I."

Then he adds this corrective: "The ancient Southwest was not like that. It had rises and falls, triumphs and tragedies, kings and commoners, war and peace -- in short, the ancient Southwest had history."

Lekson is getting help silencing the flutes from Niwot resident William Moats, an exhibits graphic designer at the museum who helped create the gallery environment for "Ancient Southwest." Fine art exhibits often seek to present art in a way that directs maximum attention to the art itself. But a natural history exhibit can include elements of presentation that contribute to the message, Moats said.

"We try to create an environment that not only highlights the content but tells a narrative story," he said.

Moats, along with colleague Charles Counter, developed a design scheme based on the colors and other aesthetic elements presented by the displayed pottery, which gave him a wealth of inspiration.

"There's a lot of information in this particular exhibit that we were able to utilize," he said. "We didn't have to invent something new."

A main feature of the presentation is the display of ancient Southwestern ruins by aerial photographer Adriel Heisey. The photographs help transport viewers to "another world in a way," Moats said.

The bird's-eye view provided by the photos gives a glimpse of how elaborate and large some of the cities in the ancient Southwest could be. If your conception of the region's ancient peoples involves peaceful communities residing in charming adobe villages, the photos might surprise you. Some of the cultures depicted here were capable of complex, hierarchical living environments with specialized facilities for dwelling, recreation and utilities.

Pottery that was excavated from these sites forms the focus of the exhibit. At a glance, the pottery seemingly has a common appearance. Shapes and textures were roughly the same across the cultures,



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and the colors are generally earthen. But a moment or two of inspection reveals them to contain important differences.

The Chaco, for example, restricted their colors to black and white, based on the examples on display. Surface designs are typically limited to geometric patterns, but in rare instances, a human or animal figure will show up. Some of the vessels look surprisingly modern, as with a pair of coffee mug-like cups that would not be out of place in Starbucks.

One helpful feature of the exhibit is a looped video that shows a time line map of the Southwest. Colored bubbles, each representing a culture discussed in the exhibit, appear, grow and disappear according to the chronology of their presence in the region. The video gives a summary visual view of when and where each culture existed.

The exhibit has a scholastic component. James Hakala, the museum's senior educator, said schools may rent "discovery kits" assembled by the museum. The kits include various items -- arrowheads, a sandal, fire-starting tools and a grinding stone, for example -- that help students learn about the culture of the ancestral Pueblo culture.

The museum is said to have a venerable collection of items from the history of the Southwest, and the pottery specimens on display are rarely seen ceramics from the collection. Much of the pottery is drawn from the Earl Morris collection, named for a famed archaeologist who helped found the museum.

If you go:

What: "Ancient Southwest: Peoples, Pottery and Place," featuring more than 100 rarely exhibited ceramics covering more than 1,000 years of Southwestern history starting in 500 A.D.

When: Through Feb. 14, 2014

Where: University of Colorado Museum of Natural History, Henderson Building, 15th and Broadway, Boulder

Tickets: \$3 suggested donation

Info: 303-492-6892 or cumuseum.colorado.edu

Obituary: Roy Dean Whiteley

Roy Dean Whiteley, age 81 of Ogallala, passed away Monday, March 11, 2013, at the Ogallala Community Hospital.

Roy was born April 10, 1931 at Imperial, Nebraska, the son of Roy Albert and Helen M. (Cooper) Whiteley. He graduated from the Benkelman High School with the class of 1948. His parents farmed in the Parks and Benkelman area and after his graduation from high school Roy worked with wheat harvest crews going from Oklahoma to Canada. While cutting wheat east of Sturgis, SD the Korean Conflict started and he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and spent thirty months in Northwest Japan on isolated early warning sites. He served with the 511th AC&W Group.

On May 4, 1957 he married Ronnie Jenser at Denver, Colorado. He worked for Western Electric after his discharge from the Air Force and they traveled the Southwestern states for the company from New Mexico to California. They spent twelve years in Idaho before moving to Ogallala with their three children, Tom, Jerry and Teresa. Roy was employed by the Nebraska Department of Roads as a full time employee for twenty- two years and for seven years as a part time employee.

He loved the outdoors and was an avid amateur archeologist. Roy liked to hunt and fish and any outdoor activities and in his quiet times he enjoyed reading and writing. He enjoyed and was proud of his wife, Ronnie, his children and grandchildren.

Online condolences may be sent at gubserfuneralhome.com. Roy donated his body to the University of Nebraska Medical Center for medical research. A memorial has been established in his memory. Gubser Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.



LAS Find of the Month, March 2013:

Members can bring an artifact to be entered into the competition at the monthly meeting, which will be judged based on the following rules:

1. Must be a member of LAS in good standing.
2. The artifact must be a personal find.
3. It must have been found within the specified time frame, i.e., within the month prior to the meeting.
4. The artifact doesn't have to be a Colorado find—all that matters is that it was found in the last month.

The Find of the Month for March 2013 was made by Alvin Plucker. (Yes, 2 months in a row!)

Type: Lovell

Material: Quartzite

Location: Weld County, Colorado



LAS News and Upcoming Events:

- Speakers Needed!** We need speakers for our monthly meetings starting April - June 2013. If you would like to give a presentation or know of someone who would give a great program please contact Andy Coca, Jean Steinhoff or Kevin Zeeck. No experience is necessary. All that is needed is a passion for our hobby and a willingness to share that passion. Thanks!
- April 2, 2013** April meeting. Program: Metro Denver Area Creek Hunting by Shane Skutvik. Shane will talk about some of his best finds from the South Platte River and other Denver area creeks.
- April 13, 2013** Perryton Stone Age Fair in Perryton, TX, from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. This event was created in 2011 with the help of our very own Tom Westfall and Rick Miller. For more information visit their website: <http://www.museumoftheplains.com/events.htm>.
- April 20, 2013** 2013 Spring Into Archaeology Fair, Poudre Valley REA Building. If you plan to exhibit please call Andy Coca at (303) 286-7711 for table space. A flyer with directions to the REA Building is attached. See you there!
- May 7, 2013** May meeting. Program: to be announced.